



# journal of integrative veterinary therapies

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## JIVT: an introduction

*The Journal of Integrative Veterinary Therapies (JIVT)* is a quarterly publication of CIVT. The Journal publishes material on all aspects of integrative veterinary medicine including Chinese and Western herbal medicine, natural nutrition, environmental medicine, philosophy, history, clinical cases and commentary.

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The College was founded in 2008 and is the world's first distance education institution specializing in evidence-based natural medicine for animals.

Our mission is to provide international leadership in delivery of comprehensive and quality veterinary natural medicine education that is evidence based. We aim to bridge science and tradition to benefit animal health and wellbeing by integrating the best of natural medicine and conventional health care practices.

We encourage an ecological and environmentally aware approach to the health of our animals, ourselves, our communities and our planet.

## Letters to the Editor

We welcome and encourage your letters and feedback.

We envisage that your words will join a vibrant and ongoing dialogue within a growing community of integrative veterinarians and allied health professionals.

**Email your letters to: [editor@civtedu.org](mailto:editor@civtedu.org)**





## Use of Xiao Chai Hu Tang to treat poor appetite in a young German shepherd

Deirdre Farr DVM

### Abstract

A two year-old German shepherd presented for anorexia of 18 months duration. Despite extensive diagnostics, a Western diagnosis was never made. Xiao Chai Hu Tang was used to successfully restore a normal appetite.

### Signalment and diagnosis

Laska is a spayed, female German shepherd born in February, 2008. She presented initially on 12 November 2010 with a decreased appetite. Laska's owner had purchased her from a breeder at nine weeks and fed her a high-quality kibbled diet. She had eaten well until seven months when the owner noticed a decrease in appetite and that Laska was chewing her feet. She stopped eating her kibbled diet but would eat treats, plus cooked meat intermittently with coaxing. Laska was currently being fed a new, grain-free kibbled diet as well as canned food twice daily.

Based on symptoms, Laska's western veterinarian had diagnosed the foot chewing as allergies and prescribed Loratadine. The workup included a physical exam, CBC and blood profile that revealed no abnormalities and no diagnosis was made regarding decreased appetite.

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Laska was spayed at three months because a large umbilical hernia required repair. A prophylactic gastropexy and repair of a vesicourachal diverticulum were performed at that time. She was up to date on vaccinations. Medications and supplements included Tri-Heart Plus, Frontline Plus, Loratadine and a glucosamine supplement.

During our exam, Laska was happy and interactive. She weighed 72lb (~33kg) and body condition score was 2/5. Physical examination was normal with no discomfort on abdominal palpation. The owner described her stools as normal, although occasionally soft when they travelled. Laska's tongue was deep purple and wet and her pulse was taut, slow and irregular. While a western diagnosis had not been determined, the early spay with gastropexy may have had some functional or anatomical effect on digestion and appetite. Differential diagnoses included metabolic disease and neoplasia.

Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) diagnosis was Spleen Qi Deficiency, based on decreased appetite, occasional loose stools and vomiting. There was evidence of Qi Stasis in the Middle Jiao from the purple tongue and taut, irregular pulse. The owner requested that acupuncture not be performed at the first visit. San Ren Tang (SRT) was dispensed (Kan Essentials, Three Seeds Combination) at three tablets bid plus VetriMega Probiotic at two capsules three times/week. A homemade meat and vegetable based diet was recommended. SRT was chosen as it provides Spleen Support while addressing Middle Burner Stasis.

At recheck on 23 November, the owner reported Laska was on the homemade diet and her appetite had not improved. She had had one soft stool, but otherwise they were normal. Her tongue was still purple and wet. Her pulse was taut, rapid and slightly slippery on the right. Acupuncture was performed (see Table 1). Active points included BL20, BL22 and ST36. TCM diagnosis was Spleen Qi Deficiency with Dampness, based on decreased appetite, loose stool, active BL20 and ST36, wet tongue and slippery pulse. There was still Qi Stasis in the Middle Jiao evidenced by the purple tongue, taut pulse and active BL22. Liu Jun Zi Tang (LJZT, Kan Essentials,



Three Seeds Combination) at three tablets bid plus VetriMega Probiotic at two capsules three times/week. A homemade meat and vegetable based diet was recommended. SRT was chosen as it provides Spleen Support while addressing Middle Burner Stasis.

At a recheck two weeks later, the owner reported Laska had eaten well for a few days following acupuncture but her appetite had decreased again, particularly in the morning. She had maintained her weight and was currently eating grain-free kibble supplemented with various cooked meats. Her tongue was purple and wet and her pulse irregular. Acupuncture was done (see Table 1). Active points included BL20, ST36, SP9 and LIV3. TCM diagnosis remained Spleen Qi Deficiency and Triple Burner Stasis. The LJZT was continued and Xiao Chai Hu Tang (XCHT, Minor Bupleurum, Kan Herbs) added at one tablet bid. XCHT better addresses Triple Burner Stasis than LJZT. The latter herb was continued to tonify the Spleen.

During the following 10 months, Laska was seen in this practice and treated with acupuncture every four to six weeks. A variety of different herbal formulas were dispensed. Response to herbal treatment remained minimal to absent. In addition, her western veterinarian did further lab work and instituted additional drug therapy. Treatments are summarised in Tables 1 and 2.

Finally, Laska was seen on 1 November 2011 and weighed 70.5lb (~32kg). The owner had instituted several changes in an attempt to improve her appetite. She had recently adopted a Boxer puppy and hoped that might stimulate Laska's appetite. She had taken her off of all medication, herbs and supplements, but had re-introduced them because Laska's appetite worsened. Her tongue remained purple and wet and her pulse irregular and taut. XCHT (Natural Path Herb Company) was prescribed at a dose of 1.5 teaspoons bid.

## Results

Within a week of beginning XCHT, Laska's appetite improved to normal. At recheck six weeks later the owner reported her appetite

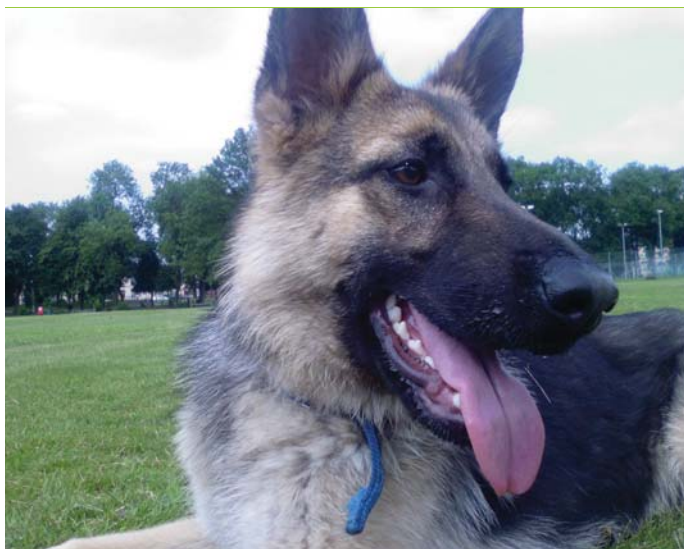
remained good and her weight was 77.8lb (~35kg). Her pulse had normal rate, strength and regularity but her tongue was still purple and wet. At May 2012, Laska remains on the same dose of XCHT. She maintains her weight and her appetite and pulse are normal. Her tongue, however, remains purple and wet.

## Formula

XCHT (Minor Bupleurum Formula) is classified as a Shao Yang Harmonizing Formula (Chen 2009). Described as 'one of the most important formulas in the history of herbal medicine' (Marsden 2006), the formula expels pathogens in the Shao Yang, addresses autoimmune conditions and restores Qi movement along the Triple Burner as well as from the body core to the limbs (Marsden 2006). Pharmacologically, the formula is hepatoprotective, anti-inflammatory, antiulcer and an immunostimulant. Minor Bupleurum's clinical applications include treatment of pancreatitis, nephritis, chronic renal insufficiency, cough, reflux esophagitis, gastritis, gastric pain, hepatitis and neoplasia (Chen 2007).

The individual herbs comprising the formula are Chai Hu, Huang Qin, Ban Xia, Sheng Jiang, Ren Shen, Zhi Gan Cao and Da Zao. The principal herb, Chai Hu, moves stagnant Qi. Ban Xia, Sheng Jiang, Ren Shen, and Da Zao tonify the Stomach Qi and nourish body fluids (Chen 2009).

A Japanese study demonstrated that XCHT (Shosaiko-to) 'possesses the capability of protecting the rat gastric mucosa as well as sucralate, but also is able to inhibit gastric acid secretions like cimetidine or atropine' (Matsuta 1996). A later study corroborated the formula's anti-ulcer effects based on its ability to suppress gastric secretions and protect gastric mucosa (Kase 1997). Research has shown XCHT exhibits an anti-inflammatory effect. One study suggests that at least part of this anti-inflammatory effect may be due to the immunomodulatory effects of Bupleurum polysaccharides on macrophages (Cheng 2010). Another Japanese study found the anti-inflammatory effects of the formula may be caused by increased production of nitric oxide, which in turn acts to regulate adhesive interactions between leukocytes, platelets and endothelial cells (Horie 2001).



but the underlying pathology was profound. Laska was playful, basically maintained weight and ate in the evening but not in the morning. However, the owner's instincts regarding the sluggish morning appetite were sound. Laska's purple tongue and tight pulse were not normal and suggested a potentially serious underlying imbalance if left untreated. This is where TCM can excel. An underlying pathology can be successfully treated before it progresses to more serious symptomatology.

Finally, it was interesting that Laska did not respond to the Kan formula XCHT earlier in treatment but responded to the Natural Path formula. While speculative, several reasons for the varied responses between the two formulas are possible. First, Laska's pattern may have changed between the first trial of XCHT and the second. This is unlikely as tongue, pulse and symptoms remained consistent throughout treatment. Second, there may be a difference in absorption and bioavailability between tablets and a loose, granular preparation. Dr Marsden suggests the difference may be due to an increased amount of Ginseng and less Chai Hu in the Natural Path formula (pers comm, May 2012).

## Discussion

There are several factors of particular interest. Firstly, a patient presenting with overt signs of Spleen Qi Deficiency did not respond to any of the formulas that provide Spleen support. As long as there was Stasis in the Triple Burner, any attempt to support the Spleen was not going to be fruitful.

Secondly, presenting symptoms were minor

**Table 1.** Most frequent acupuncture points treated between 23 November 2010 and 1 November 2011

| Acupuncture point | Treatment principle (Wynn and Marsden 2003)   |
|-------------------|---|
| BL18              | Liver Qi Stagnation (Active point)  |
| BL20              | Spleen Association Point, Drains Damp, Tonifies Qi and Blood (Active point)             |
| BL22              | Drains Damp, Opens up communication between the Three Burners (Active point)            |
| BL25              | Clears Damp Heat (Active point)   |
| ST36              | Master point for GI function, GI Tonification point, Builds Qi and Blood (Active point) |
| SP9               | Dispels Damp Heat (Active point)  |
| SP6               | Disperses Damp, Clears Damp Heat, Tonifies Qi, Blood, and Yin                           |
| LIV3              | Liver Stagnation, treats GI problems, Qi mover (Active point)                           |



**Table 2.** History of herbal treatments and results

| Date     | Herbal formula   | Treatment goal   | Other treatments and diagnostics   | Result  |
|----------|--|--|--|---|
| 11/12/10 | San Ren Tang<br>(Kan Essentials)   | Drain Damp, Support Spleen, Open Triple Burner                                 | Probiotic (VetriScience)   | No change   |
| 11/23/10 | Liu Jun Zi Tang<br>(Kan Essentials)                                      | Tonify Spleen  | Homemade cooked meat-based diet  | Improvement first few days post acupuncture then decreased appetite |
| 12/6/10  | Liu Jun Zi Tang<br>(Kan Essentials)<br>Xiao Chai Hu Tang<br>(Kan Herbal) | Tonify Spleen<br><br>Open Triple Burner  |  | Improvement for 10 days then decreased appetite                     |
| 12/28/10 | Continue LJZT and XCHT pending   | Consultation with Dr Marsden   |  | Decreased appetite  |
| 1/18/11  | Xiao Yao San   | Support Spleen by Subduing Liver<br>Overriding Spleen                          | Decreased activities, especially training and therapy dog to decrease stress | Improved appetite, although not considered normal                   |
| 2/8/11   | Xiao Yao San   | Continue treatment that has demonstrated efficacy                              | ¼-1/2 teaspoon grated ginger added to food                                   | Return to poor appetite. Stretches as if in pain                    |
| 3/1/11   | Xiao Yao San   | Worked in the past, will continue pending further consultation with Dr Marsden | Abdominal xrays show large amounts of gas in the large intestine             | No improvement  |
| 3/29/11  | Wei Ling Tang  | Drain Damp, Support Spleen   |  | No improvement  |
| 6/17/11  | Si Miao San  | Drain Damp Heat, Support Spleen  |  | No improvement  |
| 8/30/11  | San Ren Tang   | Drain Damp, Support Spleen, Open Triple Burner                                 |  | No improvement  |
| 9/20/11  | Ge Xia Zhu Yu Tang   | Dispel Blood Stagnation below diaphragm  |  | No improvement  |
| 11/1/11  | Xiao Chai Hu Tang<br>(Natural Path)                                      | Open Triple Burner   | Free T4 (normal)<br>TLI (normal)<br>Cobalamin (normal)                       | Improvement to normal appetite                                      |